



## Northern Ireland Assembly

### **AD HOC COMMITTEE ON A BILL OF RIGHTS**

#### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Thursday 26 November 2020**

**Room 29, Parliament Buildings**

Present, Room 29: Emma Sheerin MLA (Chairperson)  
Mike Nesbitt MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Paula Bradshaw MLA  
Michelle McIlveen MLA  
Christopher Stalford MLA

Present, via StarLeaf: Mark Durkan MLA  
John O'Dowd MLA (deputising for Carál Ní Chuilín MLA)

In Attendance: Caroline Perry (Assembly Clerk)  
Gareth Cross (Clerical Officer)

In Attendance, via StarLeaf: Claire Milliken (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

*The meeting commenced in open session at 2.03 p.m.*

#### **1. Apologies**

None.

*The meeting commenced was suspended at 2.04 p.m. to deal with technical difficulties.*

*The meeting resumed at 2.11 p.m.*

## **2. Briefing by the Right Honourable Sir Declan Morgan, Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland**

Sir Declan Morgan, the Lord Chief Justice, and Mandy Kilpatrick, his Principal Private Secretary, joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 2.04 p.m.

Sir Declan's briefing outlined the history of the Bill of Rights concept before examining the justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights. He also considered some international examples. Regarding Northern Ireland, Sir Declan highlighted the example of the Child Poverty Act 2010 which was the subject of litigation in 2012. Sir Declan advised the Committee that for justiciable rights there needs to be sufficient granularity. The courts will also consider if it is a political rather than a legal issue. He suggested this should inform the Committee's judgment about what it wants to do; what a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland would seek to achieve; and, how the legislature wants to see that held to account, either politically or through the courts.

*Christopher Stalford joined the meeting at 2:10p.m.*

*Michelle McIlveen joined the meeting at 2:17p.m.*

The oral evidence was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the Lord Chief Justice and Mandy for their evidence and apologised for the technical difficulties.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

## **3. Chairperson's Business**

There was no Chairperson's business.

## **4. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The Ad Hoc Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 19 November 2020.

## **5. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **6. Correspondence**

Members noted correspondence from David Russell, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and Daniel Holder, Co-Convenor of the Equality Coalition.

## **7. Forward Work Programme**

The Chairperson referred Members to the draft Forward Work Programme.

Members noted the Forward Work Programme.

## **8. Any other business**

Mark Durkan asked the Chairperson for an update on the Committee's public consultation. The Clerk said it had a good initial response and reminded Members to continue to promote the consultation. Committee staff are engaging with civil society to inform how best to go about stakeholder events in the New Year.

## **9. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting will be on Thursday 3 December 2020 at 2.00 p.m. in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting adjourned at 2.56 p.m.*

**Ms Emma Sheerin MLA**  
**Chairperson, Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights**